

A
L E T T E R

FROM

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Mr. B A X T E R,

— K
AUTHOR of

An Enquiry into the Nature of the
Human Soul, and of Matho.

TO

JOHN WILKES Esq;

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Advertisement.

THE following letter, having been shamefully mis-
gled in a State magazine, the
gentleman to whom it is ad-
dressed, in order to the an-
swering his objection; and
in order to communicate to
the public a few more letters
and reflections of
the same excellent writer.



JOHN WILKES ESQ.

Advertisement.

THE following *letter*, having been shamefully mangled in a *Scotch* magazine, the gentleman, to whom it is addressed, in justice to the author, prints this genuine copy, under his own inspection; and intends soon to communicate to the public a few more *letters* and *miscellaneous reflections* of the same excellent writer.

March 29. 1753.

A
L E T T E R
F R O M
Mr. B A X T E R.

My dearest Mr. WILKES,

YOUR letter of December the 12th alarmed me, by hearing you had got such a dangerous fall off your horse. Moderate exercise is good, but dangerous exercise, such as riding a fiery horse, is not commendable; and if you would oblige Mrs. WILKES, if you would oblige all your friends, and all good men, who conceive great hopes from you, you
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will be more cautious for the future. We had a terrible instance in the news-papers lately of a man spoke wonderfully well of, who got his death by such a fall—As to altering any thing in the address to you before the *Appendix*, I durst not do it without your participation, unless you had suggested something you would have had changed : and by this time I suppose it is published. If not, I beg you cause change any thing you think proper. I wrote to Mr. MILLAR, after presenting some copies to gentlemen in *London*, to send down five copies of it to lord BLANTYRE at *Edinburgh*, to be given to particular friends there, and I wish you would speak to him of it—As to the state of my disease, unless I would make suppositions contrary to all probability, I have no reasonable hopes of recovery, the swelling which began at my legs, being now got up to my belly and head. I am a trouble to all about me, especially to my poor wife, who has the life of a slave night and day,
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in helping me to take care of a diseased carcass. Yet I may linger on a while, as I can still walk a little through the room, and divert myself now and then with reading, nay and writing down my remarks on what I read. But I can with sincerity assure you (my most dear Mr. WILKES) death has nothing terrible to me, or rather, I look upon it with pleasure. I have long and often considered, and written down, the advantages of a separate state. I shall soon know more than all the men I leave behind me ; wonders in material nature and the world of spirits, which never entered into the thoughts of philosophers. The end of knowledge *there* is not to get a name, or form a new sect, but to adore the power and wisdom of the Deity. This kills pride, but heightens happiness and pleasure. All our rational desires, because rational, must be satisfied by a Being himself infinitely rational. I have been long aware that nothing can go beyond the grave
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but the habits of virtue and innocence. There is no distinction in that world, but what proceeds from virtue or vice. Titles and riches are laid off when the shroud goes on. But O my dearest friend! I cannot conceal from you a topick of inexpressible pleasure. Punishment itself is pleasant. God does not punish out of anger and revenge, to destroy; as we wrathful men conclude; but to correct and make better. That is the true end of punishment. Boundless punishment would shew uncontroulable power, but chastisement in proportion to our faults, shews the divine perfection of *equity*; and with a design to correct, not to throw us off, shews mercy. The end of God's punishing us therefore is our final happiness. Are not these comfortable topicks at the approach of death?—besides, what is it to be free from the pains and infirmities of the body? tho' I am satisfied just now that the weakness of my distressed limbs is as much the immediate effect of the
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same power and goodness, as their growth and strength was sixty years ago. Dare I add a word without being thought vain? this is owing to my having reasoned honestly on the nature of that dead substance *matter*. It is as utterly inert, when the tree flourishes, as when the leaf withers. And it is the same divine power differently applied, that directs the last parting throb, and the first drawing breath. O the blindness of those who think matter can do any thing of itself, or perform an effect without impulse and direction by immaterial power! — As to party-philosophers, who are for one side only, and contract a personal dislike to those who are not as stiff, they are to be pitied. I see them making their court to the heads of the party, and thus angling for a little reputation, at second hand. It is astonishing, my dear Sir, that all men are forced to own, that *all matter necessarily resists a change of its present state, either of rest or motion*; and yet when they
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come to the genuine consequence of this, to wit, that the Deity performs immediately all that is done in the material universe, they retract the former self-evident truth, and ascribe to this *resisting substance*, both a self-motive and self-determining power. I know not one book of natural philosophy, not one, free from this inconsistency. And though I be the only person (for any thing I know) who has endeavoured to establish the particular providence of the Deity, and shew his incessant influence and action on all the parts of matter, through the wide universe, from the inactivity of this dead substance: yet I hope, when the present party-zeal subsides a little, men will come more easily in to own such a plain truth. And from the same obvious principle, a great many absurd notions in natural philosophy, concerning *powers in matter*, will be rejected. — I own, if it had been the will of heaven, I would have gladly lived, till I had put in order the second part of the *Enquiry*, shewing the im-

immortality of the human soul: but infinite wisdom cannot be mistaken in calling me sooner. Our blindness makes us form wishes. I have left seven or eight different manuscript books, where all the materials I have been collecting, for near thirty years, are put down, without any order, in the book that came next to hand, in the place or circumstances I was in at the time. I took all these papers to Holland with me, thinking to put them in order there; but you know that was impracticable. And since I came home I have been prevented, either with looking after country affairs, or want of health. There are a great many miscellaneous subjects in philosophy, of a very serious nature, few of them ever considered before, as I know of: But (as I hinted above) a short time of *separate existence* will make every good man look with pity on the deepest researches we make here, and which we are apt to be vain of.— Thus I have writ you every thing I had to say.

lay. It will be kind, if you send me a
last letter. I wish you and Mrs. WILKES
all possible prosperity. And though I can-
not do you any service here, yet I hope our
friendship shall never end.

AND. BAXTER.

Whittingham,
Jan. 29th, 1750.

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Wilmington
Jan. 20th. 1750.

